

INFO	LOG-00	A-00	CA-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	PDI-00
	DHSE-00	EUR-00	OIGO-00	UTED-00	VCI-00	OBO-00	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	CDC-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00
	ISN-00	NSCE-00	OIC-00	OIG-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00
	PER-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00	SGAC-00	ISNE-00
	DOHS-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	EVR-00
	FMP-00	R-00	ECA-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DRL-00	G-00
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 INFO SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

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STATE FOR AF/S LAYLWARD, STATE ALSO FOR AF/PAPD LALLISON,
 PRETORIA FOR E WILLIAMS AND CPRIESTER

E.O. 12958: N/A
 TAGS: [SCUL](#) [SOC](#) [KIRC](#) [KPAO](#) [ZA](#)
 SUBJECT: HOLLOWED HALLS: ZAMBIA'S TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

1. (SBU) Summary: Chronic absences. Poor preparation. Classroom ineptitude. And that's just the professors. While gains have been made in elementary and secondary education, insufficient capacity, resources, facilities and training have crippled Zambia's ability to educate its citizenry at the tertiary level. Only two percent of Zambians possess a bachelor's degree or higher. Those who matriculate to state-run universities often fall prey to illicit activity in their efforts to afford basic costs. Private institutions are slowly filling the void, making some headway in developing international university linkages and meeting limited needs. However, absent stronger government commitment to and higher funding for tertiary education, Zambia is unlikely to achieve its development goals. Student and faculty reports of lax standards and allegations of mismanagement of funds suggest that opportunity may lie in offering direct faculty access to curriculum resources and student leadership training. End summary.

 Another brick in the crumbling wall

2. (SBU) The dilapidated condition of Zambia's two state-run universities, University of Zambia (UNZA) and Copperbelt University (CBU), evokes little optimism about the prospects for tertiary education. At UNZA, the country's "flagship" institution, poorly maintained facilities lack electricity, computers, reliable online access, furniture, and adequate classroom and housing space for the 10,000 students. Zambia's 2010 budget does include a 16 percent increase in education spending, but that is largely reserved for long-overdue administration and faculty wage increases. Lack of physical capacity at the two universities means the vast majority of qualified student applicants are rejected, leading many instead to pursue less marketable two-year diplomas at public technical colleges. Technical colleges themselves suffer from teacher recruitment shortfalls and construction that fails to keep pace with student demands.

3. (SBU) According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), less than a quarter of eligible higher education applicants ever matriculate. Those who do and obtain campus housing reputedly do so based on connections and nepotism. Students live six to a room built for two, as those granted a room rent out floor space to make ends meet. Faced with desperate measures to afford tuition and housing, a predominant portion of the student population, male and female, trade sexual favors to predators who routinely cruise campus areas. UNZA's HIV/AIDS outreach office has not divulged the student HIV/AIDS rate. Anecdotal evidence suggests prevalence is higher than the national average of 14.3 percent.

4. (SBU) Faculty face scarce academic resources, limited

access to materials and minimal curriculum guidance. The student bookstore lacks "required" reading for classes and university libraries are woefully under-resourced with lax security that fails to ensure protection of donated works. UNZA's library houses few books published in the last decade and no access to online journals of information. One professor of American literature admitted that a lesson about "Huck Finn" consisted of students photocopying selected pages for discussion rather than reading the actual book. Students report that classroom instruction is not rigorous and rarely consists of anything other than faculty anecdotes and debates about current political bickering. Rarely do classroom discussions encourage development of critical thinking skills.

15. (SBU) From top to bottom, apathy, corruption and incompetence have combined to create a barely functioning state-run tertiary education system. Faculty claim material donations rarely make it out of administrators' offices. Administrators grapple with chronic absenteeism among faculty. Many faculty members hold two to three jobs to supplement their income and often ditch class to attend to demands from other employers. Reports of alcoholism among faculty recently led administrators to admonish them via written notice and decree that alcohol will no longer be served in campus cafes before 4 p.m. Lack of administrative oversight has allowed professors to reduce four-hour courses to two, cancel classes for a month, and fail to engage in research, despite contract mandates to do so. Erratic class schedules and lack of meaningful classroom engagement manifest in regular student attendance rates of less than 50 percent.

Private universities pull substitute duty

16. (SBU) Motivated administrators and professors have struck out on their own to establish private universities. A small cadre of UNZA professors founded Zambian Open University (ZOU), touted as "a university without walls." Now with an enrollment of more than 5,000, ZOU is a distance learning institution that caters to primary and secondary school educators who could attain no more than a two-year certificate or vocational diploma. The university's board chairperson speculates that with the youth bulge, the country faces a deficit of 20,000 teachers, a dire situation ZOU hopes to ameliorate. ZOU seeks to increase its enrollment to 20,000 by 2020, offering five Bachelor of Education degrees ranging from early childhood to adult education, along with Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law degrees.

17. (SBU) Newly founded private religious universities are also beginning to offer four-year degrees. Northrise University, established by a U.S.-educated Zambian couple, emphasizes faith-based learning but offers bachelor's degrees in business and information technology, with plans to add a four-year agriculture degree. Northrise has linkages with reputable Iowa and California institutions that offer study abroad opportunities for Zambian students at the Northrise tuition rate. Catholic University focuses on religious education with additional bachelor's degrees in business, geography and development studies. Each of the private higher education institutions seeks expanded U.S. university linkages.

18. (SBU) In late 2009, President Banda singled out ZOU, praising its self-sufficiency. He called for greater public private partnership and extolled his own government's work to create a policy environment that allows individuals and organizations to establish educational institutions "without any difficulties." In the same breath, however, he called for greater government regulation and control of private universities.

When Zambia fails to make the grade

¶9. (SBU) Barring significant changes in education policy, increased funding and renewed political will, the state-run tertiary education system in Zambia will further deteriorate. State universities maintain less stringent, circa-1964 admission requirements, set by a government sensitive to the substandard pre-independence education system. Inefficient processing of high school exit exams requires matriculating university students to endure a gap year void of academic activity. Lecturers seek higher salaries and better teaching conditions: MOE reports that between 1984 and 1994, UNZA lost more than 230 lecturers, 161 of whom were PhDs, mostly to other institutions in southern and eastern Africa. Reportedly, UNZA seeks to phase out its English curriculum due to declining enrollment. This would be a serious blow to a country of substandard English language ability. UNZA's chancellor blames the sorry state of affairs on lack of a national vision for higher education. He warns that the dearth of university graduates threatens Zambia's ability to realize Vision 2030, the country's long-term development plan. MOE has announced plans to establish a Higher Education Authority to coordinate all higher education, but full implementation is likely to consume time Zambia does not have.

Comment

¶10. (SBU) Comment: Frighteningly, our assessment is that a Zambian university degree is no assurance of academic achievement or quality. Lack of access to adequate tertiary education makes economic growth and poverty reduction a Herculean - if not impossible - task for Zambia. In a country where 50 percent of the population is under the age of 18, such a severely undereducated youth population makes Zambia ripe for instability. Academic chaos at state-run schools precludes large-scale Mission engagement via government channels. However, the Mission can make inroads with aggressive outreach to faculty, targeted resource allocations and nurturing of individual students' critical thinking skills. Filling the void of access to information and material resources presents the greatest opportunity for the Mission. Consequently, Post intends to expand its Information Resource Center, American Center and American Corner, and more systematically pursue linkages with U.S. colleges and universities. Additionally, post will explore a longer-term educational advising strategy that establishes college prep clubs to groom students at an earlier age than senior high school, offering English language exposure and constructive activities during the gap year.

KOPLOVSKY